

San Nicolas Businessman Emphasizes Consequences of Lago Shutdown

SAN NICOLAS—Mr. Theo Arends, a prominent San Nicolas businessman, and member of the San Nicolas Businessmen's Association, was one of the panelists during a recent forum organized by the Aruba Jaycees. During the forum Mr. Arends focused attention on the closure of Lago and what it fiscally means for San Nicolas. Mr. Arends said; from the beginning of 1984 it could be noticed that business started to decline in San Nicolas. Rumors were circulating that Lago would close down. The Central Government started mention-

its closure at least a yearning that Lago was going to close down, but the Aruba Government told the communication media that that was a rumor and a lie. That was when the confusion started flying to Venezuela with intention to fix up everything in the wink of an eye, it was believed that they had good relations there and that everything would be alright, and everyone started having false hopes that Lago would stay. Until the day that Lago dropped the bomb and announced that it would close on the end of October. It is then that

everyone realized that an atomic bomb had fallen on Aruba. The devaluation of the bolivar was set aside as if it was merely small fireworks. In Arends opinion an establishment who called itself "a partner in the progress of Aruba" had a moral debt which is much more than one day for each year that it was on the island. Two months is very little time to officially nounce the closure of a refinery, an enterprise of such magnitude which contributed 50 percent of the government's income. As a good partner it should have announced

in advance. Not only to the government but to the community of Aruba. Mr. Arends said: "The whole thing became a joke, Lago said that it told the government of its intention two years ago, but in the meantime Lago de a large investment, they repaired the power house. Who would think that if someone is going to sell his house he would refurnish it. Lago said one thing but their action was something else. If commerce had known two years in advance that Lago would close it could have taken its stock into account, especially the establishments that supply Lago with materials. By giving only two months notice many businessmen were given a hard blow and they were stuck with a large stock of materials for which Lago was the sole consumer. Who were affected by the closure of Lago. In the first place the Lago employees, more than 900 professional people. Secondly the contractors who worked directly for Lago. The majority of them had to lay off 1200 people. Tradesman: welders, boilermakers, pipefitters etc. People who have been working from 25 to 30 in that profession and it is difficult for them to change to another profession.

Snackbars in the Lago area that sold sandwiches, juice and coffee to the workers, have lost that sale. Restaurants that sold midday meals and meals for overtime workers have lost that sale. Drugstores depending on the purchases of Lago and contractor employees have seen their business decline drastically. A photocopying establishment has closed. Taxi and auto bus drivers have been affected, but nobody thinks about these small groups which totally will amount to a large number. What has the government done about the closure of Lago. To express it in one word NOTHING. San Nicolas commerce went to speak to the government. There is no hope in the tourism field. They are still talking about a group coming to take over Lago. Such talks are only creating confusion and false hopes. Say that Lago has shut down tell Lago to clear out, and start dismantling. That is the only thing that can bring work for at least three or four years, said Mr. Arends. It is a fact that so long as the plant is not dismantled the government cannot touch anything in Lago, neither the piers nor anything else. Presently it is even a problem to enter Seroe Colorado.